

**NH Advisory Committee on Fire Protection
Meeting Minutes September 13, 2006**

Present: Lawrence Thibodeau, Len Daniels, Chris Burns, Steve Mango, Rob Farley, Richard Driscoll, Jerry McCarthy, Butch Burbank and John Mooney

Also present: Steve Rancourt President ECBA, ECBA members Jim Dowling, Bill Fraser and Don Mendoza, Mark Gemas President RB Allen and Will Infantine State Representative

Lawrence Thibodeau called the meeting to order and reviewed the minutes and asked the Committee if there were any corrections to be made.

Chris Burns pointed out that on page 2, last sentence of paragraph 3 should read "In New York, electricians *do not* need to have an alarm license."

John Mooney will make this correction and send the amended August Minutes to the Committee.

Chris Burns also inquired where the times for committee meetings would be posted to which Rob Farley replied that it would be on specific bulletin boards in the Statehouse, Department of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Safety. Rob also said that the Department of Safety was updating their website and Meeting times and Minutes will eventually be posted on their website which is www.state.nh.us once there, go to "State Agencies" and then to "Fire Safety" from there a "Certification" link will be added.

Chris Burns moved to accept the Minutes and Steve Mango seconded. The Minutes plus amendments were accepted unanimously.

Lawrence Thibodeau recognized the visitors in the room and then picked up from the last meeting which was a continuation of reviewing the Fire Alarm criteria. He then asked Chris Burns if he had any additional information on the "Minnesota Electricians Course" that dealt with fire alarms.

Chris Burns said that in the "Minnesota curriculum" that fire alarms were addressed in detail in the fourth year but so far New Hampshire has only accepted the first year. Chris also said he polled members of ECBA and that they are amenable to tailoring continuing education classes to address concerns that the Department of Safety have concerning fire alarms. They would like to have an idea of specific cases the Department of Safety so the ECBA can form a set of guidelines. Chris also said that the electrical codes for NH: 319-C exceeds any other training.

Steve Mango to Chris Burns: "So the Minnesota curriculum is a regimen for apprentices?"

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Chris Burns: Yes, for the first year. Before adopting additional years of the curriculum, they want to see how the first year course progresses.

Steve Mango: Pointed out that he has seen apprentices doing alarm work at jobsites and he asked if the alarm aspect of the fourth year in the Minnesota curriculum could be put into the first year to satisfy the fire alarm criteria?

Jerry McCarthy: Felt that apprentices are not ready or don't have the background for the first year but rather they need more on the job training.

Chris Burns: On the job training is a big part of the process and an apprentice is not yet ready for fire alarms. By the fourth year, he felt that apprentices would have enough mathematic knowledge to address alarms.

Lawrence Thibodeau: Ultimately, that individual would not qualify for a certificate. So he cannot work alone but rather under supervision because he does not have a certificate?

Chris Burns: Yes. He is in essence a helper and would work under an electrician and is working towards his qualification.

Steve Mango: One important facet of a project is keeping up with the changes made to the original engineering plan. Also his experience tells him that the engineering plans for alarms do not always take into consideration the 'reflected ceiling plan' which could interfere with placement and types of detectors. He feels a minimum knowledge of NFPA-72 which addresses alarms should be required.

Chris Burns: Agrees with that assessment of minimum needs and says there are two different levels that may be dealt with: 1) Designer level and 2) Distributor level. He said that in the case of new projects, retrofits and additions that electricians already submit drawings and pull permits and in essence, are already going through the inspection process. He said that all electricians must have knowledge of the National Electric Codes 2005 edition which refers electricians' to the national Fire Alarm Codes, NFPA-72 and the Life Safety Codes of NFPA-101.

Lawrence Thibodeau: "The nub of the problem we have is that the electricians want a 'free pass' yet the Fire Marshal wants 'something' that the electricians and fire alarm people can both live with."

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Steve Mango: Agrees and thinks the fourth year Minnesota curriculum moved up to the first year sounds good. Electricians have more knowledge 'in theory' so it is there. His concern is minimal on the job requirements and he cited the example of a set of alarm plans made without any consideration given to the reflected ceiling plans. He asked if an apprentice have the knowledge to know about the type and placements of alarm detectors and devices after taking the reflected ceiling plans into account.

Lawrence Thibodeau: This is not a panacea as all disciplines are faced with similar problems.

Chris Burns: Under 319-C, the Master Electrician is accountable so there already is a level of accountability in place. He also wanted to know what would happen to electricians who have been in the alarm business for many years.

Richard Driscoll: If they have knowledge of the National Electrical Code and the National Fire Alarm Code, then taking and passing a certification test should not be an issue.

Chris Burns: Would like a history of alarm problems that the Department of Safety has had in the past. Also, there is a reciprocity issue since Massachusetts and Vermont reciprocate with New Hampshire.

Rob Farley: Read the last sentence of RSA 153:5-a "*Applicants for certification shall provide proof of certification by a national organization recognized by the commissioner and provide proof of insurance.*" He also reminded the Committee that despite what we think, this is a voluntary program and no matter what we *think* will happen we ultimately have no control and we should not be derailed by what a town may or may not do. This is not 'licensing' but 'certification'. The ECBA, Fire Alarm Association or the *AFFA* can get involved with a town or city if they choose to adopt our work."

Chris Burns: In response to RSA 153 he noted that NFPA (National Fire Protection Association), which electricians follow according to 319-C, is "nationally recognized" organization. Chris also referred to the "Minutes" from the Committee's October 2005 meeting which Rob Farley stated "*Again...we will need 125% of projected cost to fund this program and it will be audited. The number of local companies and firms to voluntarily certify will most likely be driven by Local Authorities requiring this certification as well as competitors using the certification as a marketing tool.*" Chris asked "With that comment will certification eventually be made mandatory?"

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Rob Farley: The key words in RSA 153 are “Proof of certification” and that NFPA offers reference material to their codes but that electricians are not certified by NFPA. In regards to his October 2005 comments, Rob said it was based on an inquiry of the number of people to be certified not on which direction the Committee should take. Rob reminded the Committee of getting mired down on a particular issue and if it cannot be addressed or resolved that the Department of Safety would move on and make a decision concerning qualifications.

Jerry McCarthy: Reminded the Committee that he is the representative of the Electricians Licensing Board and it has been his experience that he believes that journeymen are qualified to work on alarm systems.

Steve Mango: All he wants is for electricians to bring forth specific training that satisfies criteria in alarms. He agrees that there are electrical courses that reference NFPA-72 but that there is not actually any training. He felt it is in everyone’s interest if there is a minimal knowledge of NFPA-72.

Lawrence Thibodeau to Jerry McCarthy: “On licensing exams, are there specifically alarm questions?”

Jerry McCarthy: “Generally”

Richard Driscoll: Wouldn’t it be better to just take one test?

Chris Burns: No. He would rather see electricians go to a specific town for a test. He also said he is not against continuing education.

Butch Burbank: It is obvious to him that the crux of the problem is the friction between the alarm and electrician industries and maybe it’s time for the Committee to move ahead and let the Fire Marshal’s Office step in.

At this juncture, Lawrence Thibodeau recognized ECBA President Steve Rancourt.

Steve Rancourt: It’s obvious that this is a heated issue. In the last meeting, Steve Mango spoke of 24 hours of training; which courses are they?

Steve Mango: Some examples are the NBFPA (National Burglar & Fire Alarm Association), the AFFA (Automatic Fire Alarm Association) and the IMSA (International Municipal Signal Association) as they offer either classroom or on-line training. Steve continued that the NBFPA also offers an 8 hour course on NFPA-101 and a three hour open book certification exam.

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Lawrence Thibodeau to Jerry McCarthy: Statewide, are the courses mentioned by Steve Mango comparable to journeyman's courses?

Jerry McCarthy: Statewide....some do and some don't.

Chris Burns to Rob Farley: Will Chief Degan entertain accepting an 8, 16 or 24 hour course on NFPA-72 and NFPA-101?

Rob Farley: He doesn't know but it will depend on the training curriculum but if the alarm and electrician disciplines can agree on a course that would be more amenable. Other sub-committees have identified certain criteria and hours and he hopes the alarm and electricians can, too.

Steve Rancourt: There are training guidelines in place and that electricians are qualified. "This is low voltage and electricians do not need another level of certification."

Steve Mango: There is no debate on electricians' knowledge of electricity and his concerns are less about electricity and more about design, component devicing, device placement and how they all integrate into and function as an alarm system.

Jerry McCarthy: Told the Committee that if there is a designed alarm system, the electricians work off of those plans.

Chris Burns: maybe there should be two levels of certification in the alarm end: Designer Level and Installer Level

Steve Rancourt: Agrees with Chris.

Lawrence Thibodeau: The certification can be incorporated into "criteria"

Steve Mango: In his field of alarms, *continuing education*, the student (apprentice) only received certification for attendance.

Len Daniels: Whatever is put forward, it must be by a recognized national organization. There needs to be a basic understanding of what they are doing.

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John Mooney to Chris Burns: As in the last three meetings, John asked Chris Burns a question that should be put forth to his constituency and that is if electricians that work on alarm systems would be amenable to an agreed upon level of liability insurance? To date, this question has not been answered. While the alarm issue seems to be a 'turf war' it is also important for everyone on the Committee to recognize that public safety should be the priority and this is why we are here. For an example, the public is not better served if an electrician, who works residentially, receives a free pass to install alarms and now, because of lower overhead (less insurance, free certification, no annual fees, etc) begins installing alarm systems in commercial buildings. If there is a fire or problem, will his/her insurance cover damages? Will there be enough insurance? This Committee has been meeting for almost two years and it has been suggested *repeatedly* that the alarm and electrical people get together and work out a program that is agreeable to both disciplines and they have yet to have one meeting. John noted that the ECBA has had separate meetings with the Chairman of the Committee, Lawrence Thibodeau and the Fire Marshals Office which is commendable, but yet there has been no meeting with the discipline that the electricians have a conflict with: the alarm people. There has been numerous attempts but in almost two years, no meeting? Why is that?

Chris Burns: Actually Steve Mango and he met once briefly and they "agreed to disagree."

Mark Gemas was recognized by Lawrence Thibodeau

Mark Gemas: NFPA recognized national testing organizations and electricians have interactions with Local Authorities and Engineers for testing and inspection procedures.

Lawrence Thibodeau: This Committee is charged to show *how* a discipline is certified.

Mark Gemas: His electricians make a point to cover testing and inspections.

Lawrence Thibodeau recognized Bill Fraser

Bill Fraser: Wiring methods for alarm systems are covered by 319-C and testing and inspection methods are covered by NFPA-72.

Steve Mango: Do electricians test alarm systems?

Mark Gemas: Yes and to do so, they need that NFPA-72 knowledge.

Rob Farley: NFPA tells technicians in various trades what is expected but it does not address minimum qualifications. This Committee is charged with establishing qualification criteria and it is his opinion that not all electricians are qualified in alarm testing and/or installation.

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Chris Burns: Article 760 of the National Electric Code sends the electrician to NFPA-72. The enforcement to insure the work is being done according to code is that electricians run the risk of losing their license if they do not keep to the code so in essence knowledge of the NEC and NFPA-72 is essential.

Len Daniels: Certification should also cover people modifying or renovating alarm systems.

Jerry McCarthy: Journeymen are more than capable of installing alarm systems. In regards to troubleshooting, there needs to be a higher degree of training.

Lawrence Thibodeau: In regards to alarms, does the Committee need to redefine levels of experience? He would like to see the alarm and electrician people marry up ideas that both trades can live with.

Steve Rancourt: he wants to see this process move forward and wants the alarm association and ECBA to get together. He did say that he thinks "Technicians" and "Installers" needs to be worked out among other issues.

Lawrence Thibodeau: "Good". He would like to see productivity come out of that meeting.

At this time, Chris Burns moved to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Lawrence Thibodeau.

Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting Weds, October 4 at 9am.

Respectfully submitted,
John Mooney
Secretary